



Joint Special Report

Kids, Crime and Care

**Health and Well-Being of Children in Care:
Youth Justice Experiences and Outcomes**

February 23, 2009

This is an excerpt of the full report.

**To read the entire report, visit:
www.rcybc.ca**



**REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**



**Office of the
Provincial Health Officer**



News Release

For Immediate Release
February 23, 2009

GETTING INVOLVED IN VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S LIVES EARLY AND OFTEN CAN STEER THEM FROM A PATH OF CRIME: B.C. STUDY

VICTORIA - A major B.C. study released today shows that although children and youth in care are at higher risk of becoming involved with the youth justice system, early interventions targeted at risk factors can change the paths of these vulnerable adolescents.

The report calls for a renewed focus by government to act as a compassionate, responsible parent to those children and youth in its care. This includes paying closer attention to their daily lives at school, and taking action whenever they come into contact with police.

The study, *Kids, Crime and Care: Youth Justice Experience and Outcomes*, is a joint project of the Representative for Children and Youth, and the Provincial Health Officer.

"We need to get involved in these children's lives earlier, and more often," said Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Representative for Children and Youth. "We owe it to them to help guide them away from paths of unmet potential and troubling futures, and towards lives of achievement and contribution."

Dr. Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer, said that interventions are essential, and best implemented as early as possible. "We need to begin to look at early intervention as a crime prevention strategy."

Despite recent increased attention to gang violence in B.C., the report highlights that there is no crisis in our youth justice system and that B.C. is leading the country on most youth justice measures. However, there remains a group of vulnerable children and youth whose needs are not being met, which places them at-risk when it comes to crime.

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The study -- one of the largest undertaken in Canada on this subject -- examines a wide variety of outcomes of 50,551 B.C. children born in 1986 and attending a B.C. school in 1997/98.

Data available over a 10-year span was analyzed, with a focus on youth justice system involvement. It included examining data in categories including education, special needs, justice encounters and outcomes, family structure, income assistance reliance and histories of violence.

Kendall and Turpel-Lafond said that with youth crime, accountability is always necessary and tough enforcement required in some circumstances. But they said the study shows that addressing challenges facing B.C.'s children and youth can best be done by improving stability and positive influences in their lives, working towards educational success, and examining and addressing what is going on in their lives if they come in contact with police -- just as any concerned parent would do.

This report is the third in a series of joint special reports on different aspects of the health and well-being of children in care in British Columbia.

Backgrounder attached.

Kids, Crime and Care report available at www.rcybc.ca.

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Backgrounder

February 23, 2009

Highlights of *Kids, Crime and Care: Youth Justice Experience and Outcomes*

Facts:

- 50,551 children born in 1986 and attending school in B.C. in 1997/98 were studied.
- Of the study group 3.3 per cent had been taken into care at some time.
- Currently, the provincial government is parent to more than 9,000 children and youth in care in British Columbia.

Study Findings:

- Living outside the family parental home increases the risk that a child or youth will become involved with the youth justice system.
- In the study cohort, 36 per cent of all youth in care had appeared before youth court, compared to less than five per cent of the general study population.
- A higher proportion of youth in care in B.C. become involved with the youth justice system than graduate from high school.
- When youth in care entered the youth justice system, the likelihood of high school graduation dropped to 13 per cent.
- Fewer than one-third of the children who became involved with the youth justice system graduated from high school.
- Two-thirds of those involved with youth justice had been on income assistance either by themselves or with their families by the age of 19.
- Nearly one-third of those in the youth justice system were Aboriginal.
- Aboriginal youth were five times more likely to be incarcerated than those in the general population.

What Can Be Done?

- Research shows that poverty and other identified risk factors can impact the family and increase the likelihood of future involvement with the criminal justice system.
- The more risk factors a child is exposed to, the greater the chance they have of justice system involvement, mental illness, lower education, higher rate of crime and unemployment as an adult.
- Early intervention supports to address these risk factors are essential.
- Better outcomes require a higher degree of coordination, focus and accountability.
- It's never too late for interventions.
- Stability in out-of-home placements, police contact constantly triggering reviews of plans of care, and close attention to the daily school experience of each child in care are also needed.

Summary of Recommendations

1. That when a child or youth in care, or in the Child in Home of a Relative program, has more than three placement changes in a year, a report is made to MCFD's Regional Director of Integrated Practice.
2. That MCFD revise its policies and practices to ensure foster and adoptive parents receive the training and necessary supports to care for children with mental health and behavioural issues.
3. That each time a youth in care has a new occurrence of involvement with the youth justice system, their plan of care is reviewed within 30 days and modified as required to address the criminal behaviour.
4. That the ministries of Attorney General and Public Safety and Solicitor General examine policies and practices to ensure that youth in care are not being charged in situations where adolescents living with their families would not be charged.
5. That by September 2009 every school in B.C. assigns a staff person to oversee education planning, monitoring and attainments of children in care that attend their school.
6. That MCFD publicly commits to ensuring that youth justice continues to have provincial leadership with executive representation by an assistant deputy minister.
7. That government social policy ministries produce a cross-Ministry plan that identifies an interlocking network of services to support and assist children, youth and families through the developmental stages.

Full report available at www.rcybc.ca.

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Executive Summary

We take a close look, in this report, at some of the most vulnerable children and youth in B.C., and how we can help them. *Kids, Crime and Care* is not only about children and youth in care, it is just as importantly about the responsibilities of those entrusted with caring for these children. This special relationship calls for government, guardians and child-serving agencies to be a kind, judicious – and caring – parent. This means ensuring these children receive the best educational experience possible, and knowing how these kids are doing in their schools and communities on a daily basis. If their children come in contact with the police or the courts, it means delving into the ‘why’ and the ‘how’, and coming up with ways to turn their lives around, as any caring parent would do. This report makes recommendations on ways to begin.

This study is one of the largest undertaken in Canada on youth justice and children in care, with more than 50,000 children in its cohort group, a 10-year span of data examined, research on more than 200 intervention programs, and a wide variety of outcomes measured (e.g., income assistance, education, special needs, youth and adult justice outcomes for children in care, Aboriginal children and youth and other vulnerable youth). This report and the previous two in this series¹ involved data-matching across B.C. government ministries and systems on an unprecedented level.

For this youth justice report, data on all 50,551 children born in 1986 who were attending school in B.C. in 1997/98 were studied for this review. All children included in the study were 11 years of age by December 31, 1997.²

The cohort group of children for this study was chosen because formal involvement with the youth justice system begins at 12 years of age. Starting the study at age 11 allows the tracking of the trajectory of the group through the justice system. The year 1997 was the earliest date at which all of the data from each of the ministries was of sufficient quality to undertake a multi-system analysis.

The report is based on an extensive review of the outcomes of children and youth involved in the youth justice system. It was conducted to better understand the risk factors and circumstances that too often lead to vulnerable youth, especially those living out of the parental home, becoming involved with the youth justice system.

¹ *Health and well-being of children in care in British Columbia: Health Services Utilization and Mortality*, Provincial Health Officer and Child and Youth Officer (2006) and *Health and well-being of children in care in British Columbia: Educational Experience and Outcomes*, Provincial Health Officer and Representative for Children and Youth (2007)

² Mortality was not accounted for at this time.

There is no youth crime crisis in B.C.³ However, a large and very vulnerable group of children and youth, many of whom are Aboriginal and in the care of the government, are at a higher risk of ending up in jail than their peers. Often, these children have been removed from their family home and have experienced instability and poor attachment to positive peers and adults. Although some of these youth have the strength and resilience to lead successful lives despite the challenges they face, many do not.

Living outside the parental home increases the risk that a child or youth will end up involved with the youth justice system. These children are often struggling to overcome significant issues and traumas such as neglect or abuse, and also frequently have mental health issues or developmental disabilities.

Evidence from other studies shows that children who have been neglected or abused are at least 25 per cent more likely to display a variety of problem behaviours during adolescence.⁴ This includes serious violent behaviours, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, low academic achievement and mental health problems. Not surprisingly, being abused or neglected also nearly doubles a child's chance of having a youth justice record.

Although the incidence of special needs and mental illness is high for children and youth in care or otherwise living out of the parental home, the statistics are even more alarming for those in care who are involved in the youth justice system.

Of the youth in care involved with the youth justice system, almost 72 per cent have been reported with intensive behavioural problems or serious mental illness within the school system, compared with just over two per cent for the general youth study population. Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of children in continuing custody were diagnosed with a mental disorder at least once during childhood, as revealed in the first report in this series.

The second report in this series showed that nearly 70 per cent of the children in care studied were identified with educational special needs, in contrast to 15.5 per cent of the general youth population.

B.C. has the second-lowest youth crime rate in the country and a strong delivery system of youth justice programs and services. The system has been thoughtfully built and supported and has been seen as part of a child and youth development system, rather than simply a mechanism for punishment and isolation. Much commendable and capable leadership has been shown in this area. There is extensive use of diversion to keep youth out of custody and innovative approaches such as community conferencing

³ B.C.'s youth crime rate declined by 54 per cent from 1991 – 2007. See Figure 1.

⁴ Coccozza & Skowrya, 2000, Farrington, 2006 Wingfield, 2001.

and respect for Aboriginal traditions and processes. All of these approaches help provide opportunities for youth who have committed crimes to provide restitution and be held accountable for their actions within a community setting.

The youth remaining in the system are those for whom many systems may have failed and many adults may have rejected or failed to support. Unfortunately, by the time youth in care come in contact with the youth justice system, their chances for positive outcomes have diminished considerably. Our society and government should be looking for early opportunities to intervene and change the trajectory for these vulnerable youth, especially those who are in care and Aboriginal.

In B.C., it costs up to \$20,000 per year for each youth under community supervision, and approximately \$215,000 per year for each youth in custody.⁵ The cost to society over the lifetime of an individual involved in crime is staggering, and requires us to increase our efforts to more successfully promote more optimal infant, child and youth development.

Many intervention programs reviewed for this report show promise to reduce the likelihood a child or youth will turn to crime, and to increase their resilience and positive social attachments. These programs and supports are most effective when applied throughout the life of a child – from the earliest prenatal stages, supporting pregnant mothers and families, to infant and preschool supports, through the school system to the transition from youth to adulthood.

There is a wealth of knowledge and evidence-based research on programs for these vulnerable children and their families. Some of these programs are already underway in B.C. However, it is necessary to examine those underway in the province and identify where there are any missed opportunities or gaps in service, and provide additional intervention support in our communities. Evaluation is critical, as the literature demonstrates that what works for some children, youth and families may not work for all.

The recommendations in this report are focused on concrete and practical changes that could be accomplished with little difficulty, and yet could impact children's lives in positive ways – by improving assessment and supports for the children and youth, and encouraging those in charge of these important areas to really focus on what works for vulnerable children, youth and their families.

⁵ Community supervision costs are inclusive of youth community supervision, all specialized programs such as community residential addictions treatment and also Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services assessment and treatment costs.

Investing in a range of social supports for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and youth is in itself an effective youth crime prevention strategy. Without these investments and interventions, too many of the vulnerable youth involved in the youth justice system today will unfortunately become the adult offenders that crowd the courts and jails and put an economic burden on society.

British Columbia has begun several projects in the area of early intervention and support, but work to date is scattered, not consistent across the province, and not accessible to some of the most vulnerable children and youth. A better job of integrating programs and services, filling in gaps in support and intervention, and being more accountable in evaluating and reporting on progress is critical to success.

It is also important to recognize that while early intervention is the long-term key to strengthening the resilience of vulnerable children, youth and families and building stronger communities, it is never too late to intervene. It is never too late to help a youth turn his or her life around and to gain the confidence and trust needed to succeed and become a productive adult.

Findings on Children and Youth in Care and the Youth Justice System

Children and youth living outside the parental home

- There are currently about 9,000 children and youth in care under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* for whom the B.C. provincial government is the parent.
- About 4,500 B.C. children reside with relatives under the Child in the Home of a Relative program, 300 children in kinship and out of care placements, another 1,500 First Nations children in the home of a relative in the federally administered Guardianship Financial Assistance program on reserves, and over 600 youth per year living independently on Youth Agreements.

Aboriginal children and youth

- Aboriginal children and youth are over-represented in many of the above vulnerable at-risk groups.
- In the group studied for this report, more than one in five Aboriginal youth had either been in care, in the home of a relative or both, in contrast to less than one in 30 non-Aboriginal youth.
- Nearly one-third of the youth in the youth justice system were Aboriginal.
- Aboriginal youth were five times more likely to be incarcerated than youth in the general study population.

Youth in care involved in the youth justice system

- A higher proportion of children and youth in care in B.C. become involved with the youth justice system (35.5 per cent) than graduate from high school (24.5 per cent).⁶
- Of youth in care, one in six had been in youth custody (lock up, remand or sentenced) compared to less than one in 50 of the study population.
- Approximately 41 per cent of youth in care were recommended for charges by police, in contrast to just over six per cent of the general youth population.
- The most common offences for youth in care were property-related offences, assault, and administrative offences, such as breaching bail supervision or probation conditions.

⁶ Source: Figure 8 ("Percentage of involvement with the justice system") and Figure 10 ("Graduation rates of those involved in the youth justice system").

- Thirty-six per cent of all youth in care⁷ appeared before youth court, in contrast to less than five per cent of the general youth study population.
- Just over 30 per cent of children in the Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program and 18 per cent of Aboriginal youth were recommended for charges.
- A higher proportion of male youth in continuing custody appeared in court, at 48 per cent.
- Once youth in care entered the youth justice system, their likelihood of graduating from high school dropped to just 13 per cent.

⁷ This number includes youth who were in care at some point in their lives.

Section 5: Recommendations

This report again underscores all-too-familiar issues – lack of planning, inconsistent use of assessments, lack of focus, and inability to monitor. Better outcomes for children require a much higher degree of coordination, focus and accountability. British Columbia must work with greater urgency on the education outcomes for the vulnerable children at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system, to support good development outcomes, but also in the interests of public safety, security and a cohesive society.

A year in the life of a child is a very long time. Each year that passes without essential yet basic improvements to our child-serving system means more B.C. youth veer off onto paths of unmet potential and troubling futures. Progress on recommendations made in our previous joint report on education outcomes has been very slow and inadequate given the magnitude of the problem.

Some youth enter care because of their involvement with the youth justice system, while others are already in care and then engage in criminal activity. Such distinctions do not alter the special relationship of trust and responsibility placed on the Province. This special relationship, of being 'the parent' entrusted with shaping the futures of these vulnerable youth, demands more careful assessments, so that plans of care reflect not only the past experiences of these children and youth, but their future potential.

In each of the following recommendations, it is imperative that ministries, organizations and Aboriginal governments identify specifically how they will address the Aboriginal youth *they are* serving. This goes beyond mere counting. It goes to the very heart of the development of a new relationship with First Nations communities. Government must find ways to respectfully work with Aboriginal communities to address the conditions that lead to over-representation of Aboriginal youth in the areas that can so negatively change their paths and ultimately their lives – participation in youth justice, entry to child welfare, low high school graduation, and poor health.

Stability

In our advocacy work with young people and their families, issues of stability in guardianship are very common. Living arrangements must be stable with consistent, qualified caregivers able to respond appropriately to the youths placed with them. Our analysis reveals that children living out of the parental home are more likely to be recommended for charges than children in the general population. Does this mean that the youth justice system is being used to reinforce disciplinary measures in foster home or other placements? It is not within the scope of this review to definitively answer this, but a kind and judicious parent would surely want to know. Available data on moves in care remains inadequate. Existing policies and practice are clearly deficient in promoting stability and appropriate caregiving supports for vulnerable children, especially for Aboriginal children.

Research shows that some children who appear to be resilient to early trauma and prenatal damage experience onset of mental health and behavioural problems at adolescence, which can cause conflict and instability within a home placement. It is critically important to the stability of the child that caregivers be provided with training, supports and resources to build attachment, as they stabilize and overcome the mental health and behavioural problems of the child or youth in their care.

Merely issuing directives from government or ministry headquarters will not address most of the issues we have identified. In many cases, it is not policies that are lacking but sufficient will to act at the local level, sometimes combined with insufficient attention to the actual practice within organizations. The following seven recommendations are intended to specifically address and improve the day-to-day lives of vulnerable children.

Recommendation 1

That whenever a child or youth in care or in the CIHR program has more than three changes in placement outside of the parental home within one 12-month period, a report is made to the Regional Director of Integrated Practice.

Detail:

- This recommendation to be followed up with a detailed implementation plan by MCFD by October 30, 2009.
 - Each subsequent move for a child must be similarly documented.
 - Reports to be submitted to the Regional Director of Integrated Practice within one week in the case of unplanned moves, and as far in advance as possible in the case of planned moves.
 - A process for tracking moves of children in the CIHR program be developed by October 30, 2009.
 - Aggregate reports of moves in care to be submitted to the Representative quarterly, beginning January 1, 2010.
 - The Representative will publish annual summaries of moves in care by MCFD region.
 - MCFD must report annually on this to ensure corporate attention to compliance and accountability within its quality assurance program.
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Recommendation 2

That MCFD revise existing policies and practices to ensure that specialized training, appropriate supports and resources are available to foster parents and adoptive parents, to support and care for children with mental health and behavioural issues.

Detail:

- MCFD to publicly report on these enhancements by October 30, 2009.
- Detailed implementation plans for introducing new policy, training and supports should be in place by November 15, 2009.
- Training curriculum and resources need to be developed in partnership with delegated Aboriginal agencies, BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations, existing foster parent support groups and mental health professionals.
- Critical incident reports and calls for assistance should be monitored by MCFD on a continuing basis to determine whether changes to the training or support program are required.

Contact With Youth Justice System

The data presented in this report clearly establishes that children in care in British Columbia experience much higher rates of being charged than other youth, and are much more likely to end up in custody. This is a cause for concern, as youth who are incarcerated are at a greater risk of developing negative social attitudes and undesirable contacts, and may be stigmatized after their release. Although there are many reasons for youth in care having higher charge rates, there is a concern that some of these youth may be charged in situations where youth living with their families would not be charged, or that youth in care may suffer from the absence of parental advocacy once they are in the justice system. We are also concerned over the number of charges arising from caregiving arrangements (i.e., common assault charges laid due to inappropriate placements or where police are called to remove a child as a substitute for appropriate community resources when the caregivers are not able to meet the child's needs).

The data also shows that the offences which children in care in British Columbia are most often charged relate to administration of justice charges, for such matters as failure to attend court, and breach of bail or probation. Youth in care need better support and supervision to help them comply with court orders. There is also a concern that in some cases involving youth in care, there may be conditions of judicial interim release or probation that are imposed to achieve desirable social objectives rather than to protect the public or hold offenders accountable. Efforts must be made at all levels to reduce the number of administration of justice offence charges for youth in care.

Recommendation 3

That upon each new occurrence of a youth in care having involvement with the youth justice system, including police, the youth's plan of care be reviewed within 30 days with youth justice professionals and service providers, and modified as required to address the criminal behaviour.

Detail:

- Such plans should subsequently be reviewed every three months, to ensure that appropriate follow-up support and action are in place.
 - Regional Directors of Integrated Practice to review plans of care to ensure that services provided to the young person are appropriate to their circumstances.
 - Standards for planning for children be reviewed by September 15, 2009, to ensure that there is an enhanced focus on responding to the issues raised in this report.
 - The MCFD audit program be revised to ensure that youth justice involvement is accurately tracked. An audit plan to be in place by October 30, 2009.
 - MCFD should report publicly on compliance with the plan of care standards. Such reporting to be posted within one month of completion of each audit and related follow-up activity.
 - MCFD must develop data linking mechanisms to be able to gather data and monitor on a regular basis the involvement of children in care with the criminal justice system.
 - Quarterly reports of child in care involvement with the criminal justice system should be provided to the Representative for Children and Youth, beginning January 1, 2010.
 - The Representative will annually report on the number and nature of charges for youth in care.
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Recommendation 4

That the Ministries of Attorney General and Public Safety and Solicitor General examine policies and practices to ensure that youth in care are not being charged in situations where adolescents living with their families would not be charged.

Detail:

- A report on charge policy for children in care to be provided to the Representative by September 15, 2009.
- Prosecutors, police and the judiciary to receive training and effective information regarding the needs and circumstances of children living out of the parental home.
- Support for training for police, prosecutors and the judiciary must be through appropriate engagements with leads in these areas, including Chiefs of Police, Criminal Justice Branch, the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court as well as the Chief Justices of the Superior and Appeal Courts.
- The objective of training is to better understand the circumstances of vulnerable youth in British Columbia and how the criminal and civil justice system impact their lives.

Education

The following recommendation by itself will not automatically lead to improved school attachment and attainment, but overall will lead to an increased positive focus on this extremely vulnerable group. This report clearly shows that those young people most likely to become involved with the youth justice system are also most likely to become detached from school, to have poor educational outcomes and to have multiple special needs.

Increased attention to the details around each child in care's school experience is needed. This is not the same as existing Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The detailed planning and on-going focus for each child in care must be specific to *all* of the components of a child's education, including attendance, lateness, extra-curricular activities, sports, clubs, etc. This enhanced planning for children in care will help ensure a continuous, broad view of the child's life at school – just like any parent in the community would do. The success of this detailed monitoring and planning will require regular discussions with the child-in-care's social worker or guardianship person.

Parents in the community participate in 'big picture' planning for their children's education, but are not expected to manage their daily classroom achievement. For these vulnerable children and youth, the Province as responsible parent must get more involved in ensuring they stay in school and graduate. Having education professionals overseeing the school performance and engagement of each child in care, as is the case in the United Kingdom, places the practice responsibility where the professional experience lies, rather than with a social worker or person responsible for guardianship.

Recommendation 5

That every school in British Columbia assign a single staff person to oversee education planning, monitoring and attainments of the children in care that attend their school. This function should be in place and functioning by September 2009.

Detail:

- The Ministry of Education to revise its policy for Boards of Education to make this expectation explicit by June 30, 2009.
- Boards of Education to develop detailed implementation plans by October 30, 2009.
- Boards of Education to publicly report on compliance with this new standard by December 1, 2009.
- The Ministry of Education to provide a report to the Representative by December 15, 2009 on provincial compliance.
- Superintendents of Achievement should be assigned responsibility to review the levels of attainment of children out of the parental home and work to identify supports required to see progress for children is at grade level.
- A process for ensuring that education planning for children and youth in the CIHR program, and those on Youth Agreements, be included in this initiative. Process to be implemented in time for the September 2010 school year start.

Youth Justice Leadership

The factors that have lead to the relative success of British Columbia's youth justice system need to continue to be nurtured. Strong investment in rehabilitation, pro-social supports, and a focus on child development are commendable and have been accomplished over at least two decades of genuine leadership and professional public service anchored in evidence-based approaches.

Youth Justice is a unique program that operates under federal legislation, yet is administered by three different provincial ministries. Youth justice requires a dedicated advocate and experienced leader to ensure that the needs of the vulnerable youth in

the justice system are met within this complicated setting, and that positive trends in the youth justice system continue. It is essential that a lead senior executive be tasked with maintaining a focus on the well-being and safety of children, with a foundation in child development and outcomes, and that the lead executive provide government-wide support, as well as participate at the federal level in policy discussions.

This serves government-wide interests in a strong system consistent with the legal rights of youth and the state's responsibility to ensure their development continues given their immaturity. The lead executive must have the seniority and support to ensure that resources are directed at rehabilitation and education supports for children and youth in contact with the criminal justice system to reduce their risk of future offending and promote public safety. This role must allow for system-wide accountability for the outcomes achieved for vulnerable children in the criminal justice system as well as assisting in advocating for the welfare of British Columbia's children when federal changes are contemplated.

Recommendation 6

That MCFD publicly commits to ensuring that youth justice continues to have provincial leadership with executive representation by an Assistant Deputy Minister.

Detail:

- * The Deputy Minister of MCFD to provide confirmation of this commitment by May 31, 2009.

Supports to Families

We believe that a focused cross-Ministry approach is needed – one that addresses the life course from conception through to adulthood. Such a plan should be based on the best research evidence available about programs and should address both the risk factors identified above, as well as the treatment and service needs of families who may be having difficulty. Such a plan should specifically address the particular needs and circumstances of vulnerable children, including those living out of the parental home.

Given the extraordinarily disadvantaged circumstances of many Aboriginal families and communities in the province, this cross-ministry plan must provide a special focus on their situation.

The evidence base for developing such a plan is clear: research-based early intervention programs are effective at impacting the criminological risk factors associated with crime and thus, they prevent or reduce criminality while also producing collateral benefits for individuals, families, schools, communities and society as a whole.

Specifically, the research has shown that:

- 1) early intervention efforts are necessary and are best implemented as early in the life-course as possible
- 2) there are examples of programs that support families and are effective in preventing conduct problems in childhood, delinquency in adolescence, and crime in adulthood (e.g., prenatal and early childhood nurse home visitation, Perry Preschool Project in Chicago, bullying prevention programs, treatment foster care)
- 4) outreach support to children, youth and families can assist during transition periods and help to stabilize parent/family situations and coordination with schools
- 5) school-based intervention programs have been empirically tested and found to be effective at reducing correlates of crime as well as delinquent behaviour (Roots of Empathy, and the Seattle Social Development Project)
- 6) intervening in *multiple* systems that simultaneously target *multiple* risk factors for criminality (e.g., individual child factors, family factors, school factors, peer factors, community factors) yields significant results in the prevention and reduction of delinquency
- 7) youth-justice based intervention programs have been found to be effective at reducing delinquency (e.g., interpersonal skills training, behavioural programs, teaching family homes).

Recommendation 7

That the social policy ministries of government (Education, Health, MCFD, MHSD, Healthy Living, Attorney General, PSSG) produce a cross-Ministry plan that identifies an interlocking network of services to support and assist children, youth and families through the developmental stages (from prenatal to adulthood).

Detail:

- * A lead Ministry to be identified for developing the plan by September 30, 2009.
- * Existing networks of service providers be consulted about ways to link their services into a coherent plan by November 30, 2009.
- * Aboriginal communities and organizations must have the opportunity to participate in the development of the plan.
- * A draft plan be provided to the Representative by January 4, 2010.
- * A detailed implementation and evaluation plan to be developed by February 1, 2010.
- * That the 2010/11 fiscal year be the target date for implementation of a plan – the object of which is to provide for a seamless network of services to children, families and youth in B.C.

Conclusion

Each of the seven recommendations is based on one fundamental concept:

That the government of British Columbia, as the parent of children in care, must lead by example and create the best possible learning and living conditions for its children.

Moving from 'just a concept' to daily actions – to becoming a goal and mission of all in the child-serving system – is essential to changing the lives of so many vulnerable young people in B.C.

British Columbia must work to immediately strengthen its system by focusing on outcomes, evidence-based approaches and regular public accounting on what is accomplished for the most vulnerable children.

This report has identified major stumbling blocks, such as lack of compliance with standards, limited integration of services to children, and inadequate accountability for outcomes. Intensified, focused efforts must be directed to address these if British Columbia is to see real progress.



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